

MEETING OF INFORMATION GROUP ON THE FALKLANDS

SUNDAY 23 MAY, 1615 HOURS

Present:

Mr. B. Ingham	-	No. 10
Mr. M. Pentreath	-	MOD
Mr. P. Brazier	-	COI
Mr. D. Colvin	-	Cabinet Office
Mr. S. Fuller	-	Presentation Unit
Mr. I. Kydd	-	No. 10

Military

MOD had issued three statements today in respect of fairly minor military action. This action was part of the process of attrition. There was no news of any major air activity and no evidence of any Argentine forces on the Falklands attacking British forces. The Argentine air force had suffered very bad losses on Friday and therefore was likely to be recuperating. It was thought that Argentine morale was not high, but nevertheless there could be some highly trained forces amongst their conscripts. They could not be written off.

Our forces had established a bridgehead which was being consolidated. Small reconnaissance parties were moving inland. There was about 40-50 miles of very inhospitable territory between us and the Argentines.

The decision how fast to press ahead was one for the Commanders. They would possibly follow a policy of attrition knocking out assets such as radar, ammunition supplies, etc.

Total UK losses appeared to be 72 not counting the three crew missing from the helicopter which crashed in Chile.

It was suggested that our military activity should be presented as an achievement on the path to victory. Apparently we had air command.

Diplomatic

The Argentines appeared to have accepted the Peruvian initiative but with certain reservations. We were still open to diplomatic initiatives but with forces now ashore on the Falklands our position had now changed, and the British political situation was completely different.

MOD advised that John Nott would be appearing on Panorama on Monday, but had declined Nationwide.

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MEETING OF INFORMATION GROUP ON THE FALKLANDS

10 AM MONDAY 24 MAY 1982

Present:

B Ingham	-	No 10
J Groves	-	Director General, COI
Miss J Whiting	-	FCO
J Gee	-	MoD
D Colvin	-	Cabinet Office
R Hatfield	-	Presentation Unit
S Fuller	-	Presentation Unit
H Mills	-	Chancellor of the Duchy's Office
B Mower	-	No 10.

Diplomatic

There was some discussion about wavering US support for the UK position. Henderson had been instructed to speak to Haig and try to strengthen his resolve in the face of a fair amount of internal opposition and worries about long term US relations with Latin America. Our line must continue to be that the best way to stabilise the position is to get the Argentines off the Islands as quickly as possible. The only way of securing a cease-fire will be their unconditional withdrawal.

The Security Council debate continues. It is understood that Ireland may hold the key to the necessary nine votes required to get a resolution. Approaches would be made to them in Brussels tonight.

The Prime Minister's reply had gone to the Pope overnight and we will probably make available the gist of it in the course of the day.

Military Position

Ministry of Defence did not know whether Goose Green airstrip had been taken. Our position remained one of consolidation and reconnaissance in strength. It was too early to offer judgements about how long it might take to complete the operation.

Mr Nott is appearing on Panorama tonight. He will do a 20 minute interview at the end and will deal with the international as well as the military aspects. It was expected that both Mr Costa Mendez and General Walters would appear earlier in the programme. The Chairman relayed the views of American correspondents who were angry about being misled over our invasion intentions.

Interviews

Vic Shroot has joined No 10 on a temporary secondment from the Department of the Environment to help co-ordinate and do the

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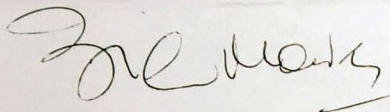
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necessary preparatory work on television and radio bids. Departments were asked at least to let him know about any bids and, as necessary, to seek his help in the arrangements.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Group will be held at 10 am on Tuesday, 25 May, 1982.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "B. Mower", is written over the typed name and date.

BRIAN MOWER
24 May 1982

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